

The political profile of the Liège region

With 185.488 inhabitants on the 1st of January 2004, Liège is after Charleroi, the most populated city of the Walloon region. It is also the centre of an important agglomeration. The Socialist Party (PS) has been the main political force for a long time. The Liège region has become, with its industrialisation, the home of a lively and militant labour movement, despite the heavy tensions that sometimes arise. It is also the home of the social struggle often associated with important political connotations. The political landscape is in general the same as in the whole Walloon Region.

The most recent elections were the regional ones of 13th of June 2004. The area of Liège corresponds with the administrative district of the same name and covers the whole territory of the Regional Management (Direction Régionale) of Le FOREM, which comprises amongst others two municipalities of the district of Huy (Ferrières and Hamoir) and one municipality of the district of Waremme (Saint-Georges-sur-Meuse). On the 13th of June 2004 in the area of Liège the PS obtained 41.7% of the votes, the Mouvement Réformateur (liberal tendencies) 22.3%, le Centre Démocrate Humaniste (CDH, before 'Parti social-chrétien', 'Social – Christian Party') 15.1%, Ecolo 8.5 % (green party) and le Front national (extreme right) 7.4%.

The local establishment of parties can be appreciated by the results of the local elections. The last ones were held on the 8th of October 2000. An analysis can be made of the outlying areas around the city of Liège; the situation may vary locally by the electoral results.

The town council of the city of Liège is composed of 20 people that were elected from the Socialist Party (which obtained 34.8 % of the votes), 11 people from the Mouvement Réformateur (MR) (21.3%), 10 elected from the Centre Démocrate Humaniste (CDH) (19.5%) and 8 elected from Ecolo (15.4%). Extreme right lost its representatives during these elections. The town's majority is composed of a coalition between PS (socialist) and CDH (Christian Democrats).

The city of Liège is surrounded by working class suburbs with an outdated industrial legacy characterised for a long time by particularly active trade unions and where since the beginning of the 20th century an immigrant population has been present (notably of Italian origin). In the surrounding towns of the south west (Seraing, Saint-Nicolas), the west (Grâce-Hollogne, Ans), the north (Herstal, Blégny) and the east (Beyne-Heusay, Soumagne) and in a geographically isolated municipality (Trooz), the Socialist Party holds the majority of seats in the town councils. These 9 municipalities where the Socialist Party is the only party present, cover about 37% of the district's population.

A second area comprises the south-east (Fléron, Chaudfontaine), the south-west (Esneux, Neupré), the west (Flémalle, Awans) and the north-east (Dalhem). These are seven municipalities where the Socialist Party is associated to one or more parties.

In municipalities further away, situated in the north (Juprelle, Oupeye, Bassenge, Visé) and the south (Sprimont, Aywaille, Comblain-au-Pont) and in three municipalities that belong to other areas (Ferrières and Hamoir in the south and Saint-Georges-sur-Meuse in the west), the PS is in the opposition, in general because other parties have formed a coalition. In fact, it is only in one of these municipalities where one party – being the CDH – has the majority of seats in the town council.

The demographic and economic importance gives the Liège region a significance not to be ignored that sometimes determines Walloon politics because of its continuous and notable presence in federal politics.

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